

Medal of Merit Presentation – Tony Martin

Thursday May 5th, 2016 – 3:00 p.m.

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good afternoon everyone. I'm extraordinarily pleased to be here with you as we recognize an outstanding citizen—Tony Martin— with the City of Sault Ste. Marie's Medal of Merit.

Sault Ste. Marie is extremely proud of how we continue to produce citizens, who individually or as a member of a group, excel in various capacities, bringing great pride to our community in a way that should be celebrated.

In 1969, the Sault Ste. Marie City Council established the Medal of Merit award to annually honour such excellence and achievement. A citation was approved by the Council of the day which reads:

“The Mayor and members of City Council have long recognized the need to pay tribute to those special individuals or groups who achieve top honours in athletic, cultural or academic fields or who make outstanding contributions to our community.”

This Council also passed a by-law to establish a committee that would review nominations from the community and to consider other such individuals who might be worthy of recognition.

Presentation of the Medal of Merit award which includes the medal, pin, and citation, represents Sault Ste. Marie's highest honour.

The Medal has the City coat of arms embossed on its face. The colours of the ribbon and the pin – gold, blue and grey – are intended to project the image of Sault Ste. Marie as a flourishing and prosperous city.

The gold is symbolic of the Civic Centre, which has become known as a landmark on the seaway and centre of local government in the area.

The blue represents the water or seaway, and the grey band represents industry, steel in particular. The significance attached to this medal is indicative of an exceptional achievement or contribution.

Each year, medal of Merit recipients are chosen by the Medal of Merit Committee, comprised of the Mayor acting as chair, and individuals representing a cross-section of the community.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the members of the 2015 committee:

- Dionne Elgie;
- Jack Ostroski;
- His honour Justice Romuald Kwolek; and,
- Mark Macpherson

Dionne is here – unfortunately, the others were unable to attend, but I do thank them for their service on the committee.

Medal of Merit Award recipients are selected from all spectrums and walks of life.

The list of past honorees includes scientists, athletes, academics and community builders – people who have contributed to the betterment of our community.

Since the inception of the Award, we have recognized over 150 citizens including: Dr. Roberta Bondar, Dr. David Walde, the Hollingsworth Family, Team Jacobs, Mac and BJ Marcoux, Diane Marshall, Sandra Houston, and Ron Irwin – just to mention a few. Today, Tony Martin’s name will be added to this esteemed group of people.

I’m glad that quite a few members of Tony’s family and some long-time colleagues were able to join us for today’s celebration. They include:

- Tony’s wife Anna;
- Sister Anne and brother-in-law Richard Erechook;
- Sister Cathy and brother in-law Bill Mansfield;
- Sister Helen Lamon;
- Sister Rosemary Connor
- Friend and former colleague Bud Wildman and his wife Anne;
- Longtime friend and colleague Madge Sanderson and her husband Stuart Bolduc; and,
- Friend and former colleague Leah Bothwell.

Tony has enjoyed a long career in the public eye and much of his story is well-known. However, I will take a few moments to recount his biography and some of his many accomplishments.

Tony was born in County Louth, Ireland, though his family immigrated to Canada soon afterwards. He spent his formative years in Wawa, Ontario. In 1974, Tony graduated with a B.A. in Political Science and Government from Laurentian University. Soon after, he added a diploma in Recreational Leadership and Community Development from Confederation College.

From 1981 to 1990 Tony worked as a pastoral assistant and in a variety of outreach capacities with Blessed Sacrament Parish in Sault Ste. Marie. In 1983, he helped co-found the Blessed Sacrament Soup Kitchen, which later evolved into the Soup Kitchen Community Centre and which itself was previously recognized as a Medal of Merit recipient.

For a time, Tony was the General Manager of Transcend Homes, a local workers' cooperative. He also served as a trustee on the Northern District Catholic School Board.

Serving as a trustee must have stoked Tony's interest in politics, because in the provincial election of 1990, Tony became the Sault Ste. Marie candidate for the Ontario New Democratic Party. He ultimately prevailed in a tight battle with former Mayor Don McGregor, winning the riding by less than 1,000 votes.

Tony's election saw him join Bob Rae's government. Throughout the Rae government's tenure, Tony would serve as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education. He was also a member of the Standing Committee on Social Development.

Tony had a key role in participating in the restructuring of Algoma Steel when it entered bankruptcy protection for the first time in the early 1990s. He also helped secure numerous provincial investments in Sault Ste. Marie, including funding for the George Leach Athletic Centre at Algoma University.

Though the Rae government fell from power in the provincial election of 1995, Tony was re-elected by a comfortable margin in Sault Ste. Marie. He would win re-election to Queens' Park for a third time in 1999.

As MPP from 1995 to 2003, Tony held a variety of portfolios and continued advocating for numerous social justice issues. In the provincial election of 2003, Tony's continued popularity was not enough to hold Sault Ste. Marie for the NDP, as a Liberal wave washed across much of the province and led to a change in government.

After taking stock of things after the 2003 election, Tony found that he still had the desire to continue on in politics. In the federal election of 2004 he challenged Sault Ste. Marie's incumbent MP, my uncle Carmen Provenzano. Tony was successfully elected in another close race. He would go on to be re-elected twice in the federal elections of 2006 and 2008.

During his seven years in the House of Commons, he held critic portfolios that included poverty, social development, social policy, child care and persons with disabilities.

He was also the critic for the FedNor economic development initiative. As well, he authored bill C-545, a private member's bill to eradicate poverty, in addition to helping develop an all-party report on poverty.

Tony was unsuccessful in his bid for a fourth federal term in the election of 2011. He returned to Sault Ste. Marie full-time after the 2011 election and resumed working in the community. Fittingly, he became a director on the board of the Soup Kitchen Community Centre. He also became a part-time instructor at Algoma University, teaching courses in the Community, Economic and Social Development (CESD) program.

In addition to teaching, Tony also found the time to further his own education. He completed an MBA in Community Economic Development from the University of Cape Breton in October 2013.

During his lengthy career in elected office and his even lengthier community involvement, there is no question that Tony Martin has made an outstanding contribution to the community over many years.

On behalf of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, it brings me great pride to present the 2015 Medal of Merit to Tony Martin—a most deserving recipient. Congratulations Tony!

At this time, I would like to ask Tony and Anna to come forward for the presentation of the citation

I also have a certificate from MP Terry Sheehan, who was unable to attend in person but sends his congratulations, to present.

So now, if we could have the members of the Martin family come down to the front of the room, we'll take a few moments for photos.

That concludes the formal portion of today's presentation. Again, I would like to thank everyone for coming and I would also like to thank the City staff who helped to arrange today's ceremony.

When you hold a position such as Mayor, if you are lucky, you will get to be a part of a few memorable events during your tenure in office. I know that today will be such a memory for me. So I welcome you to please stay for a while and enjoy some coffee and cake with us.

Thank you.